

Plut. Alex., 31,3-33,7

Text Übersetzung:

(Übersetzung Bernadotte Perrin)

[31,3] Now, the great battle against Dareius was not fought at Arbela, as most writers state, but at Gaugamela. The word signifies, we are told, ‘camel's house,’ since one of the ancient kings of the country, after escaping from his enemies on a swift camel, gave the animal a home here, assigning certain villages and revenues for its maintenance.

[4] It so happened that in the month Boëdromion the moon suffered an eclipse, about the beginning of the Mysteries at Athens, and on the eleventh night after the eclipse, the armies being now in sight of one another, Dareius kept his forces under arms, and held a review of them by torch-light; but Alexander, while his Macedonians slept, himself passed the night in front of his tent with his seer Aristander, celebrating certain mysterious sacred rites and sacrificing to the god Fear. [5] Meanwhile the older of his companions, and particularly Parmenio, when they saw the plain between the Niphates and the Gordyaeon mountains all lighted up with the barbarian fires, while an indistinguishably mingled and tumultuous sound of voices arose from their camp as if from a vast ocean, [6] were astonished at their multitude and argued with one another that it was a great and grievous task to repel such a tide of war by engaging in broad day-light. They therefore waited upon the king when he had finished his sacrifices, and tried to persuade him to attack the enemy by night, and so to cover up with darkness the most fearful aspect of the coming struggle. [7] But he gave them the celebrated answer, ‘I will not steal my victory’; whereupon some thought that he had made a vainglorious reply, and was jesting in the presence of so great a peril. Others, however, thought that he had confidence in the present situation and estimated the future correctly, not offering Dareius in case of defeat an excuse to pluck up courage again for another attempt, by laying the blame this time upon darkness and night, as he had before upon mountains, defiles, and sea. [8] For Dareius would not give up the war for lack of arms or men when he could draw from so great a host and so vast a territory, but only when he had lost courage and hope, under the conviction brought by a downright defeat in broad day-light.

[32] After the men were gone, Alexander lay down in his tent, and is said to have passed the rest of the night in a deeper sleep than usual, so that when his officers came to him in the early morning they were amazed, and on their own authority issued orders that the soldiers should first take breakfast. Then, since the occasion was urgent, Parmenio entered the tent, and standing by his couch called Alexander twice or thrice by name; and when he had thus roused him, he asked him how he could possibly sleep as if he were victorious, instead of being about to fight the greatest of all his battles. [2] Then Alexander said with a smile: ‘What, pray? Dost thou not think that we are already victorious, now that we are relieved from wandering about in a vast and desolated country in pursuit of a Dareius who avoids a battle?’ And not only before the battle, but also in the very thick of the struggle did he show himself great, and firm in his confident calculations. [3] For in the battle the left wing under Parmenio was thrown back and in distress, when the Bactrian cavalry fell upon the Macedonians with great impetuosity and violence, and when Mazaeus sent horsemen round outside the line of battle to attack those who were guarding the Macedonian baggage. Therefore, too, Parmenio, much disturbed by both occurrences, sent messengers to Alexander telling him that camp and baggage were gone, unless he speedily sent strong reinforcements from front to rear. [4] Now, it chanced that at that instant Alexander was about to give the signal for the onset to those under his command; but when he heard Parmenio's message, he declared that

Parmenio was beside himself and had lost the use of his reason, and had forgotten in his distress that victors add the baggage of the enemy to their own, and that those who are vanquished must not think about their wealth or their slaves, but only how they may fight gloriously and die with honour. [5] After sending this message to Parmenio, he put on his helmet, but the rest of his armour he had on as he came from his tent, namely, a vest of Sicilian make girt about him, and over this a breastplate of two-ply linen from the spoils taken at Issus. His helmet was of iron, but gleamed like polished silver, a work of Theophilus; and there was fitted to this a gorget, likewise of iron, set with precious stones. [6] He had a sword, too, of astonishing temper and lightness, a gift from the king of the Citieans, and he had trained himself to use a sword for the most part in his battles. He wore a belt also, which was too elaborate for the rest of his armour; for it was a work of Helicon the ancient, and a mark of honour from the city of Rhodes, which had given it to him; this also he was wont to wear in his battles. [7] As long, then, as he was riding about and marshalling some part of his phalanx, or exhorting or instructing or reviewing his men, he spared Bucephalas, who was now past his prime, and used another horse; but whenever he was going into action, Bucephalas would be led up, and he would mount him and at once begin the attack.

[33] On this occasion, he made a very long speech to the Thessalians and the other Greeks, and when he saw that they encouraged him with shouts to lead them against the Barbarians, he shifted his lance into his left hand, and with his right appealed to the gods, as Callisthenes tells us, praying them, if he was really sprung from Zeus, to defend and strengthen the Greeks. [2] Aristander the seer, too, wearing a white mantle and having a crown of gold upon his head, rode along the ranks pointing out to them an eagle which soared above the head of Alexander and directed his flight straight against the enemy, at which sight great courage filled the beholders, and after mutual encouragement and exhortation the cavalry charged at full speed upon the enemy and the phalanx rolled on after them like a flood. [3] But before the foremost ranks were engaged the Barbarians gave way, and were hotly pursued, Alexander driving the conquered foe towards the centre of their array, where Dareius was. For from afar he was seen by Alexander through the deep ranks of the royal squadron of horse drawn up in front of him, towering conspicuous, a fine-looking man and tall, standing on a lofty chariot, fenced about by a numerous and brilliant array of horsemen, who were densely massed around his chariot and drawn up to receive the enemy. [4] But when they saw Alexander close at hand and terrible, and driving those who fled before him upon those who held their ground, they were smitten with fear and scattered, for the most part. The bravest and noblest of them, however, slain in front of their king and falling in heaps upon one another, obstructed the Macedonians in their pursuit, weaving and twining themselves in their last agonies about riders and horses. [5] But Dareius, now that all the terrors of the struggle were before his eyes, and now that the forces drawn up to protect him were crowded back upon him, since it was not an easy matter to turn his chariot about and drive it away, seeing that the wheels were obstructed and entangled in the great numbers of the fallen, while the horses, surrounded and hidden away by the multitude of dead bodies, were rearing up and frightening the charioteer, forsook his chariot and his armour, mounted a mare which, as they say, had newly foaled, and took to flight. [6] However, it is thought that he would not then have made his escape, had not fresh horsemen come from Parmenio summoning Alexander to his aid, on the ground that a large force of the enemy still held together there and would not give ground. For there is general complaint that in that battle Parmenio was sluggish and inefficient, either because old age was now impairing somewhat his courage, or because he was made envious and resentful by the arrogance and pomp, to use the words of Callisthenes, of Alexander's power. [7] At the time, then, although he was annoyed by the summons, the king did

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not tell his soldiers the truth about it, but on the ground that it was dark and he would therefore remit further slaughter, sounded a recall; and as he rode towards the endangered portion of his army, he heard by the way that the enemy had been utterly defeated and was in flight.